

Paul United Church of Christ
5312 Old Blue Rock Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45247
Allen M. Fluent, Transitional Pastor
Order of Worship for Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
August 15, 2021

(Although we are now holding worship in our building, we are conscious of the ongoing challenge of in-person worship while the coronavirus persists, and the need many feel to avoid the possibility of contagion. Therefore, we will be continuing the practice of sending a worship bulletin to all who are on our mailing lists for email or hard copy. Those who will be worshipping from home and who have computer access will also be receiving a recorded version of the service that will be sent out by email on Sunday afternoon and also can be seen on our Facebook page. We welcome your participation in any way that is convenient for you, and we encourage you to share our worship service with any person you know who may appreciate receiving it.)

Welcome, Announcements and Prayer Concerns

Prelude (recording begins)

Call to Worship (based on Psalm 111:1-2, 7-10)

Praise the Holy One! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

Great are your works, O Lord, studied by all who delight in them.

The works of your hands are faithful and just; all your precepts are trustworthy.

They are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.

You sent redemption to your people; you have commanded your covenant forever

Holy and awesome is your name.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. Your praise endures forever.

***Hymn**

"Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise"

#48 blue hymnal

***Immortal, invisible, God only wise, in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of days, almighty, victorious, thy great name we
praise.***

***Unresting, unchanging, and silent as light, nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and
love.***

***To all life thou givest, to both great and small; in all life thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree, and wither and perish – but naught changeth
thee.***

***Great Father of glory, pure Father of light, thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render, O help us to see 'tis only the splendor of light hideth thee.***

The Wisdom Celebration: Proverbs 9:1-12

Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars.

She has slaughtered her animals, she has mixed her wine,

She has also set her table.

She has sent out her servant girls, she calls from the highest places in town,

“You that are simple, turn in here!”

To those without sense, she says,

***“Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Lay aside immaturity, and live,
and walk in the way of insight.”***

Whoever corrects a scoffer wins abuse; whoever rebukes the wicked gets hurt.

A scoffer who is rebuked will only hate you; the wise, when rebuked, will love you.

***Give instruction to the wise, and they will become wiser still; teach the righteous and they will
gain in learning.***

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

For by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life.

If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it.

***Hymn**

“O Splendor of God’s Glory Bright”

#144 blue hymnal

***O splendor of God’s glory bright, from light eternal bringing light,
O light of light, the fountain spring, O Day, all days illumining.***

***Come very Sun of heaven’s love, in lasting radiance from above,
And pour the Holy Spirit’s ray on all we think or do today.***

***Confirm our will to do the right, and keep our hearts from envy’s blight;
Let faith her eager fires renew, and hate the false, and love the true.***

***All praise to God the Father be, all praise, eternal Son, to thee,
Whom with the Spirit we adore forever and forever more.***

Epistle Reading: Ephesians: 5:15-20

*Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time,
because the days are evil. So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Do
not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms
and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your
hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord
Jesus Christ.*

Lesson from the Hebrew Scriptures: 1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:2-14

Then David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David. The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established....

Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David; only, he sacrificed and offered incense at the high places. The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place; Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. At Gibeon, the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil, for who can govern this your great people?"

It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall compare with you. If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life."

Then Solomon awoke; it had been a dream. He came to Jerusalem where he stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. He offered up burnt offerings and offerings of well-being, and provided a feast for all his servants.

Sermon

"Making the Most of the Time"

"Wisdom" in the Scriptures is a core attribute of God, sometimes depicted as a woman who invites us to understand the mysteries of creation. A central focus of wisdom writings is the understanding that human life is subject to limitations and thus must be taken as a gift to be enjoyed for the time that is available to us. Living for things that do not satisfy our inner being is foolishness to those endowed with wisdom. Happiness is only achieved by those who devote themselves to nurturing the soul through acts of goodness.

Musical Interlude

Jake Rizer

Pastoral Prayer

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

(commonly attributed to Reinhold Neibuhr)

Holy Wisdom, we pray to be embraced by your understanding arms. May we know our lives as gifts from you, precious, each and every day, to be spent in thankfulness and wonder. And knowing the miracle and the fragility of these days, may we learn kindness for one another and appreciation for whatever our neighbor has to share.

May our minds be open to the truth, our hearts a channel for empathy and love, and may our will, transfigured by the Christ within us, be directed toward costly discipleship for the sake of all who suffer in the troubled places of our world.

And now we pray as Jesus taught us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

*Closing Hymn

“Be Thou My Vision”

#502 blue hymnal

*Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart; naught be all else to me, save that thou art –
Thou my best thought, by day or by night, waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.*

*Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word, I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;
Thou and thou only, first in my heart, high King of heaven, my treasure thou art.*

*High King of heaven, my victory won, may I reach heaven’s joys, O bright heaven’s Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall, still be my vision, O Ruler of all.*

*Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you his peace.

Postlude